



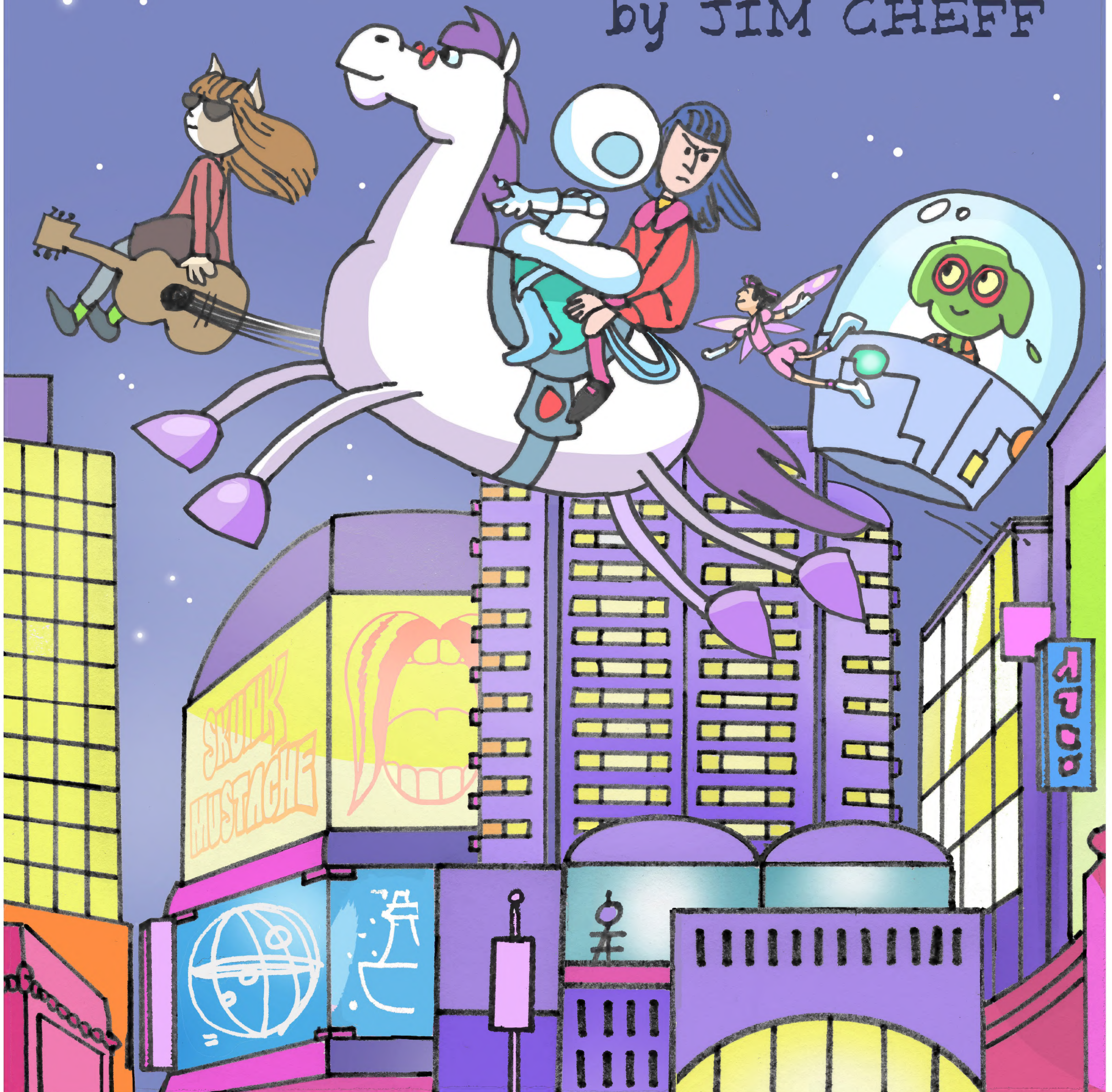
# THE BIG BOOK OF MARY FARFISA

Mary Farfisa's Outer Space Radio Theater



# Mary Farfisa

by JIM CHEFF

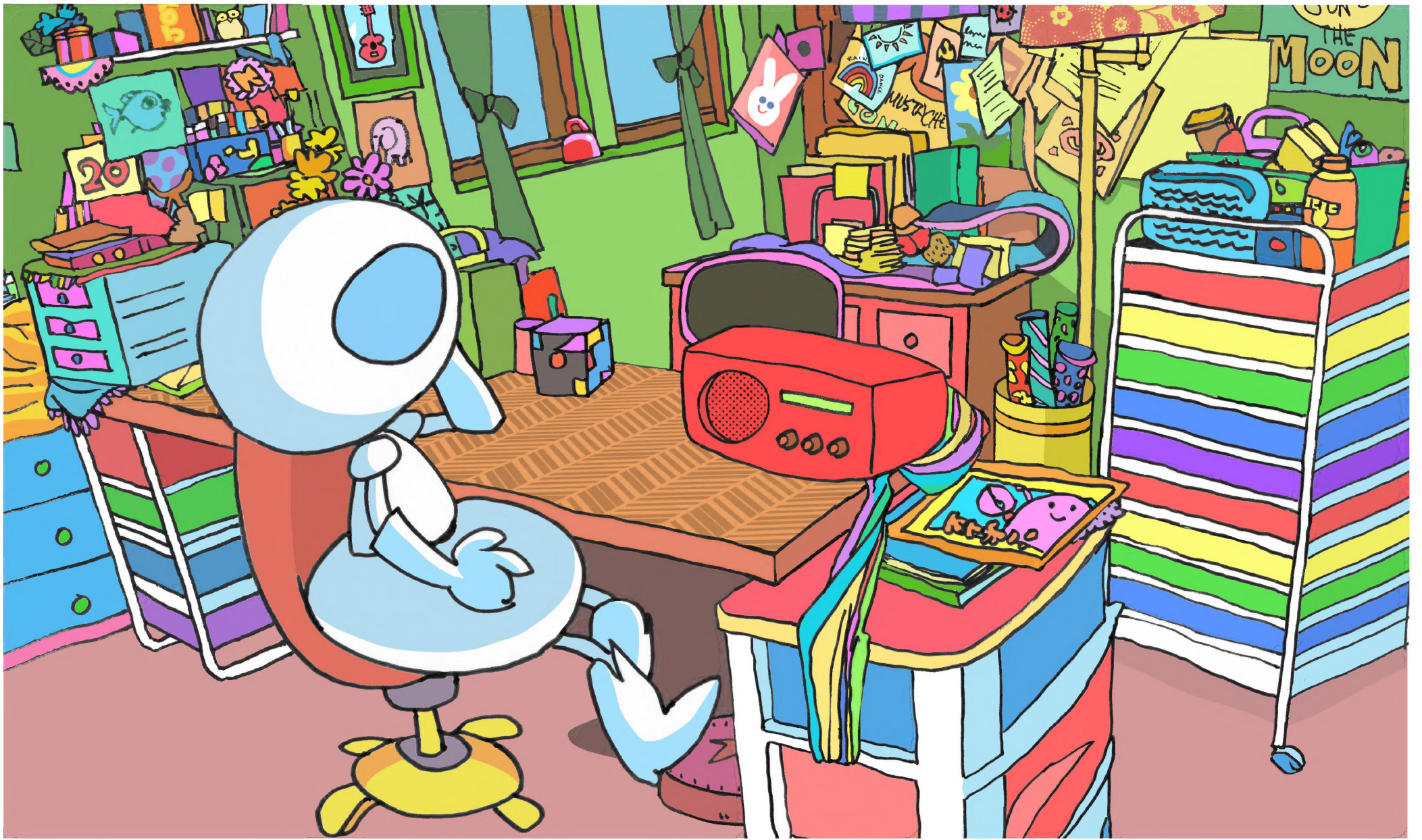






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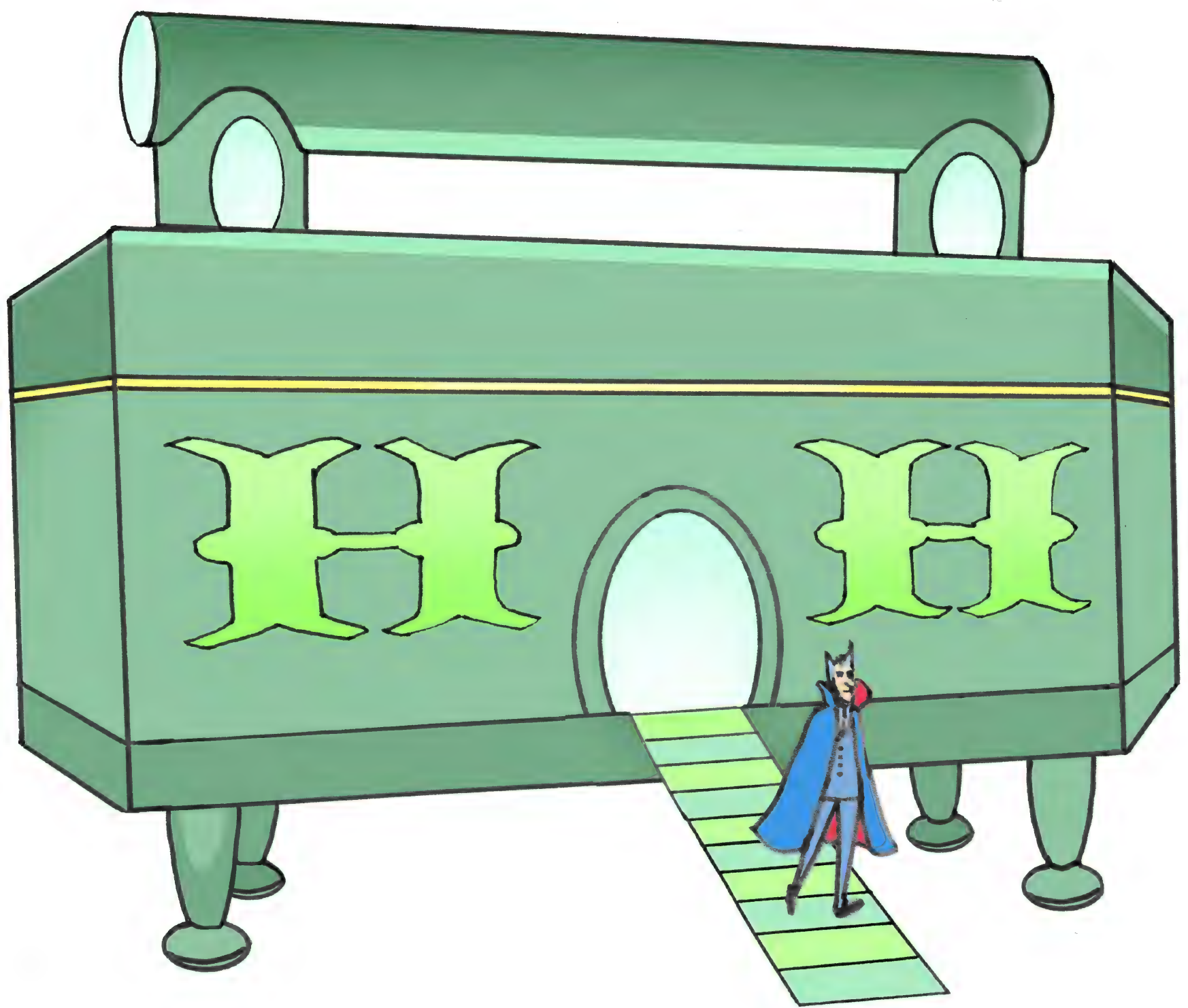














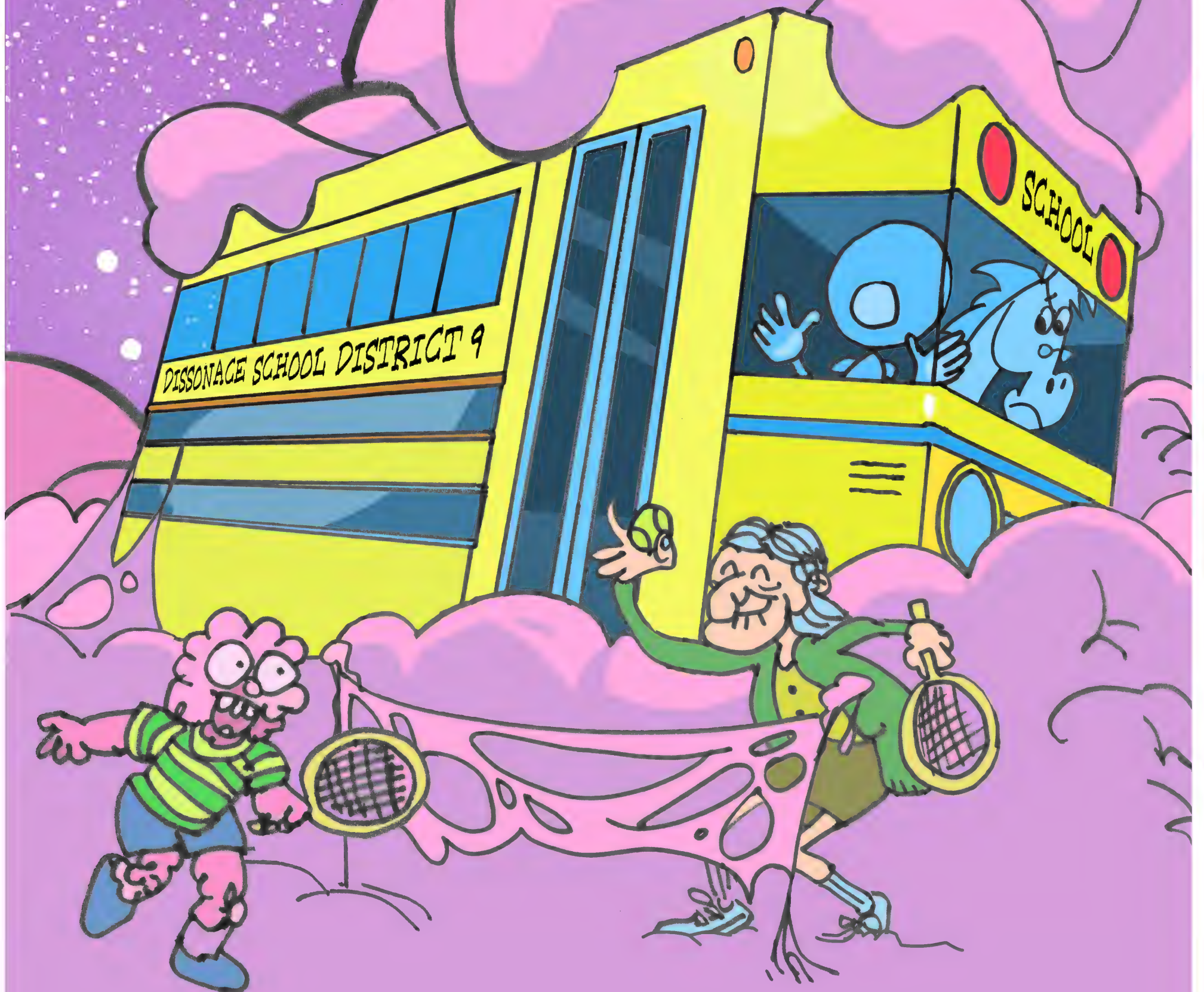




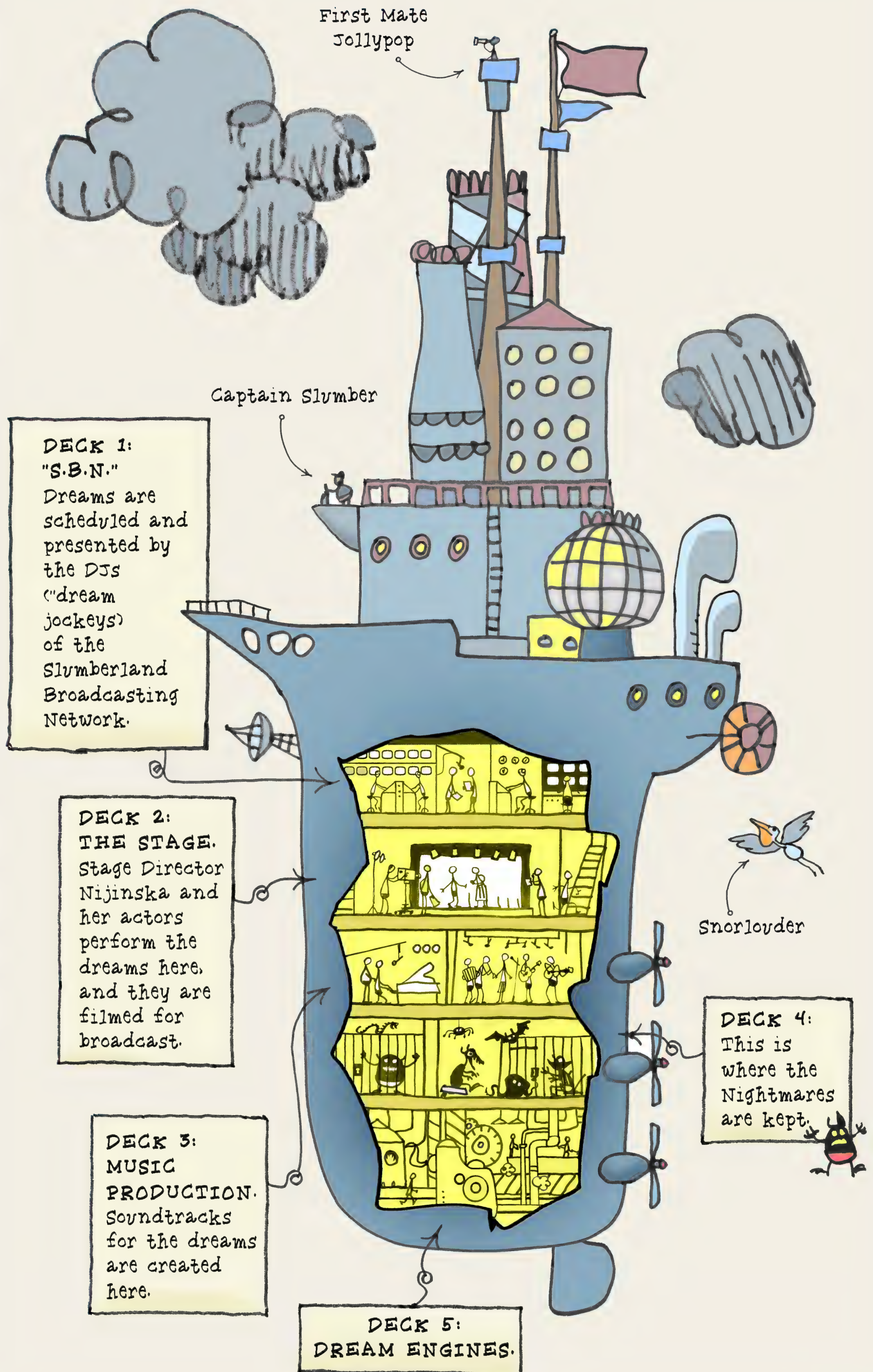




# Mary Farfisa









Saturday mornings at 10 am  
On Radio Sunnyside!

# MARY FARFISA'S OUTER SPACE RADIO THEATER



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**A Radio Play for Kids, Every Saturday Morning**  
**On RADIO SUNNYSIDE, 101.5 fm ([radiosunnyside.org](http://radiosunnyside.org))**



















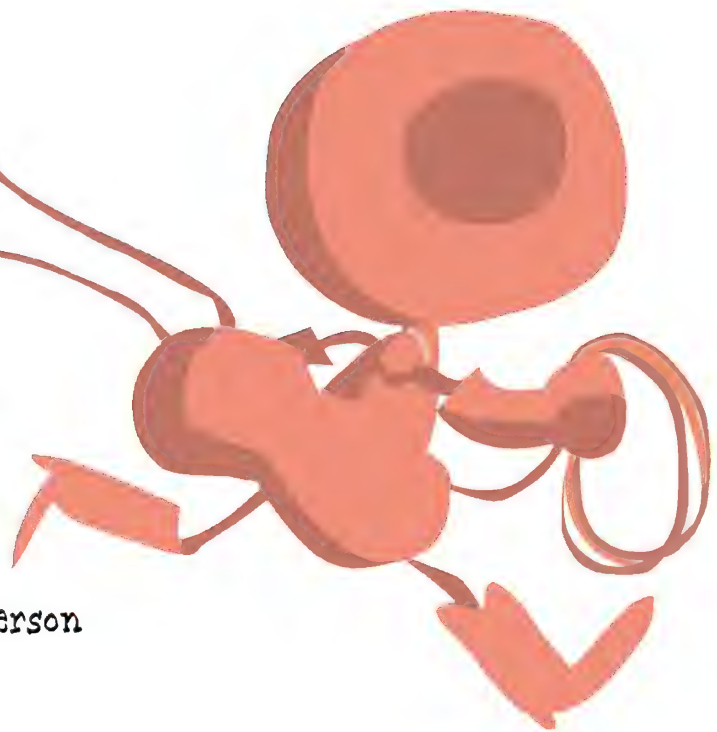








WHAT SONG DOES A STAR SING Cara Alboyq  
 OVERDUE Cara Alboyq  
 THE SEA OF INFORMATION Leslie Baker  
 TELEPORTONIC DELIVERY Jag Thacker  
 THE RITE OF SPRINGS Jim Cheff  
 LET IT OUT! Tim Young  
 THE DREAM BOAT Terry Alan, Bill Culbertson, Miranda Marie  
 ZIP YER LIPS Jim Cheff  
 IN THE LISTENER'S LIBRARY Cara Alboyq  
 RADIANCE Terry Alan  
 THE UNIVERSE ON MY GUITAR Katie King  
 THE KRONE BREZHEEN Jim Cheff, cast  
 SMILE Emma Bax  
 SAD UNIVERSE Cara Alboyq  
 HAPPY UNIVERSE Nancy Andrews  
 WHO, ME? Cat Black  
 I LIKE THE SPECIAL Katie King  
 PINK-EYED ICKYBOD SONG April Stalder  
 DADDY-O'S POEM James Hasapis  
 TIME FLUTE Hunter E. Redday  
 HANDYMAN HOW'S THEME SONG Katie King  
 THE HAPPIEST SONG Mrs. Bax's class  
 JOHN CAGE Cara Alboyq, Jim Cheff  
 ON THE MOON Katie King, Cara Alboyq, cast  
 SUMMER WON'T GO! Cara Alboyq, Andra Henderson  
 YOU ARE MY SUNSHINE Mrs. Bax's class  
 ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT Nancy Andrews  
 JAYNE SARRAH'S THEME SONG Katie King, Frank Furtado, Bekah Coe



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THE  
**CLOUD**  
SHEPHERD



**MARY FARFISA'S OUTER SPACE RADIO THEATER**

SATURDAY, MAY 5, AT 10AM ON RADIO SUNNYSIDE, 101.5 FM [radiosunnyside.org](http://radiosunnyside.org)





**THE  
BALLAD  
of  
MARY  
FARFISA**

**APRIL 9, 2016 at 10:00 am  
on RADIO SUNNYSIDE**

**101.5 FM**







Mary  
Farfisa's  
Outer Space Radio  
Theater



NoVICE  
DANCER  
on  
the  
Streams  
of  
TIME





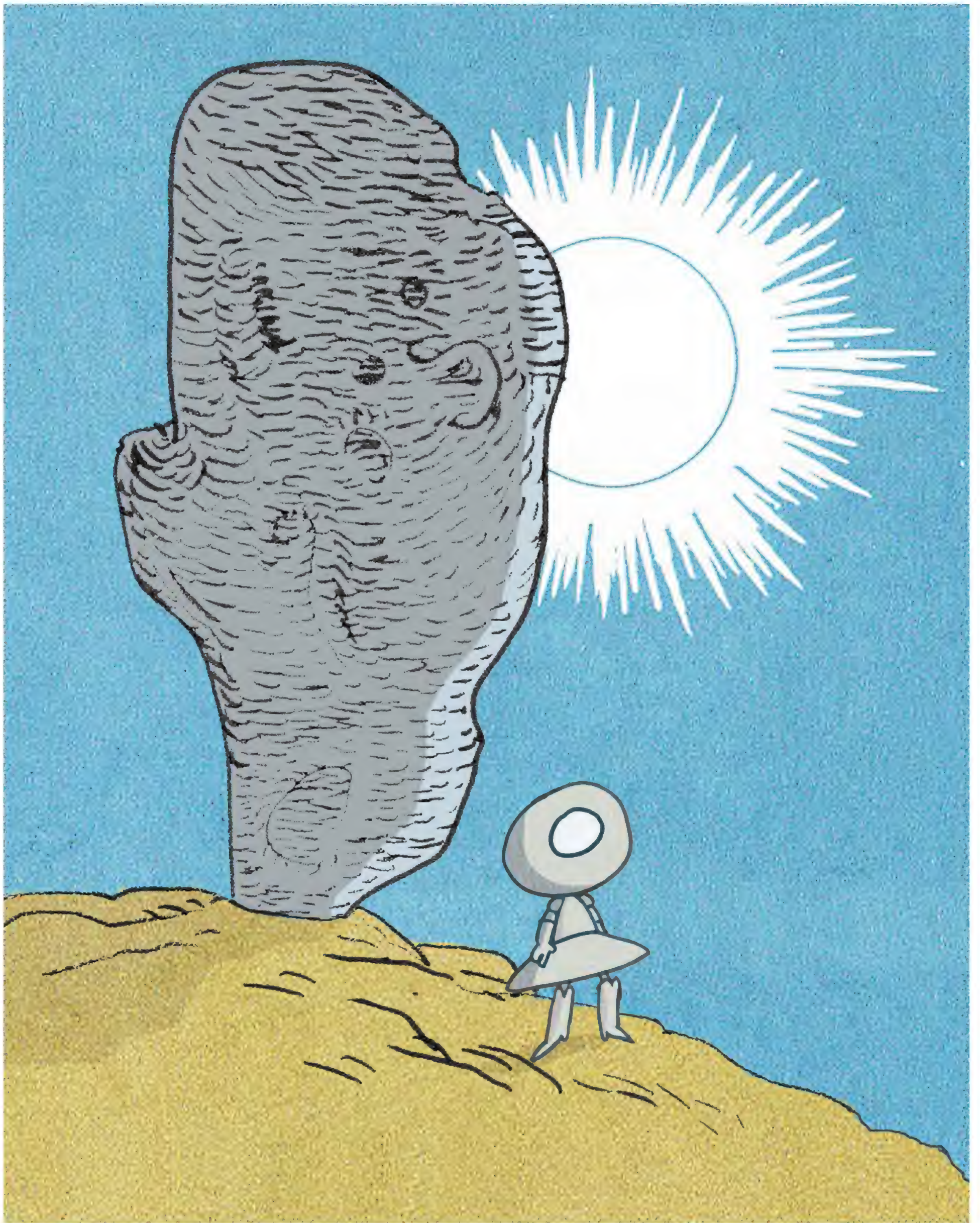








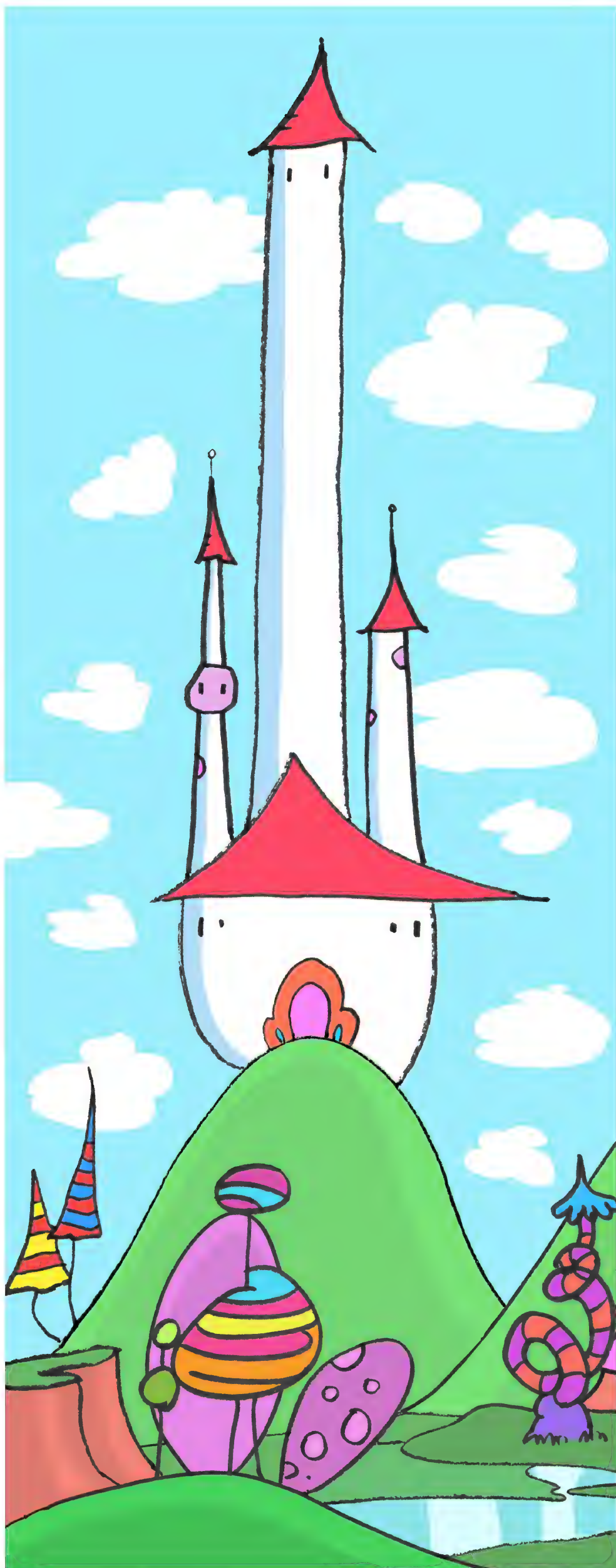












“It’s back! It’s back! I’ve got my beautiful buzz back!” says Skreet, flying happily through the air.

“But, Mr. Vakyoomapotamus, why do you look so sad?” asks Mary Farfisa.

“I’m sad because Queen Silencia still has all the sounds I sucked up yesterday, locked up in the tower of her castle! And she’ll never let them out! And, even if I don’t suck up any more sounds for her, she can always find another Vakyoo – M-M-M-Makyoo – V- V-V- Vamakyoo –

“Vakyoomapotamus,” says Briscoe.

“Then we have to find Queen Silencia, and convince her to stop doing this!” says Mary.

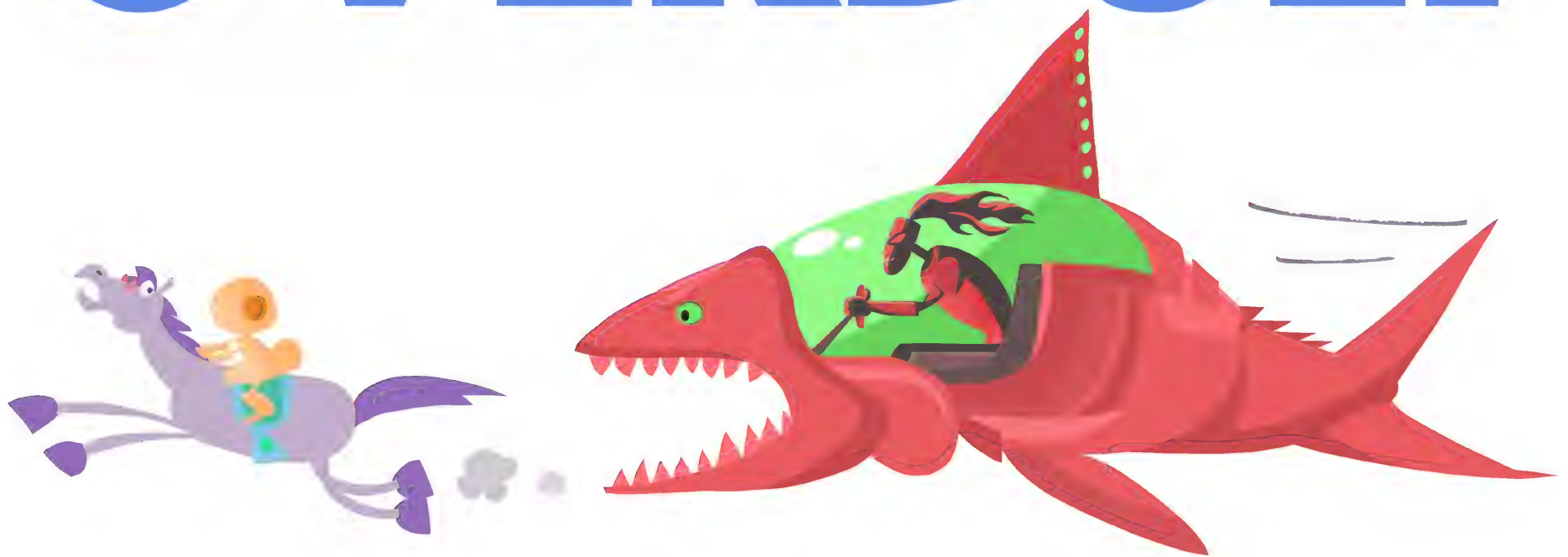
“Oh, you can’t do that!” Skreet warns. “Queen Silencia is very bad-tempered! And she won’t listen! As soon as you start to say something, she’ll say: “SSHHH!!! Quiet, you!”

But Mary Farfisa has made up her mind! She’s not going to let all the wonderful sounds and songs and music of Bazorbabill be sucked up and silenced, and never heard again!

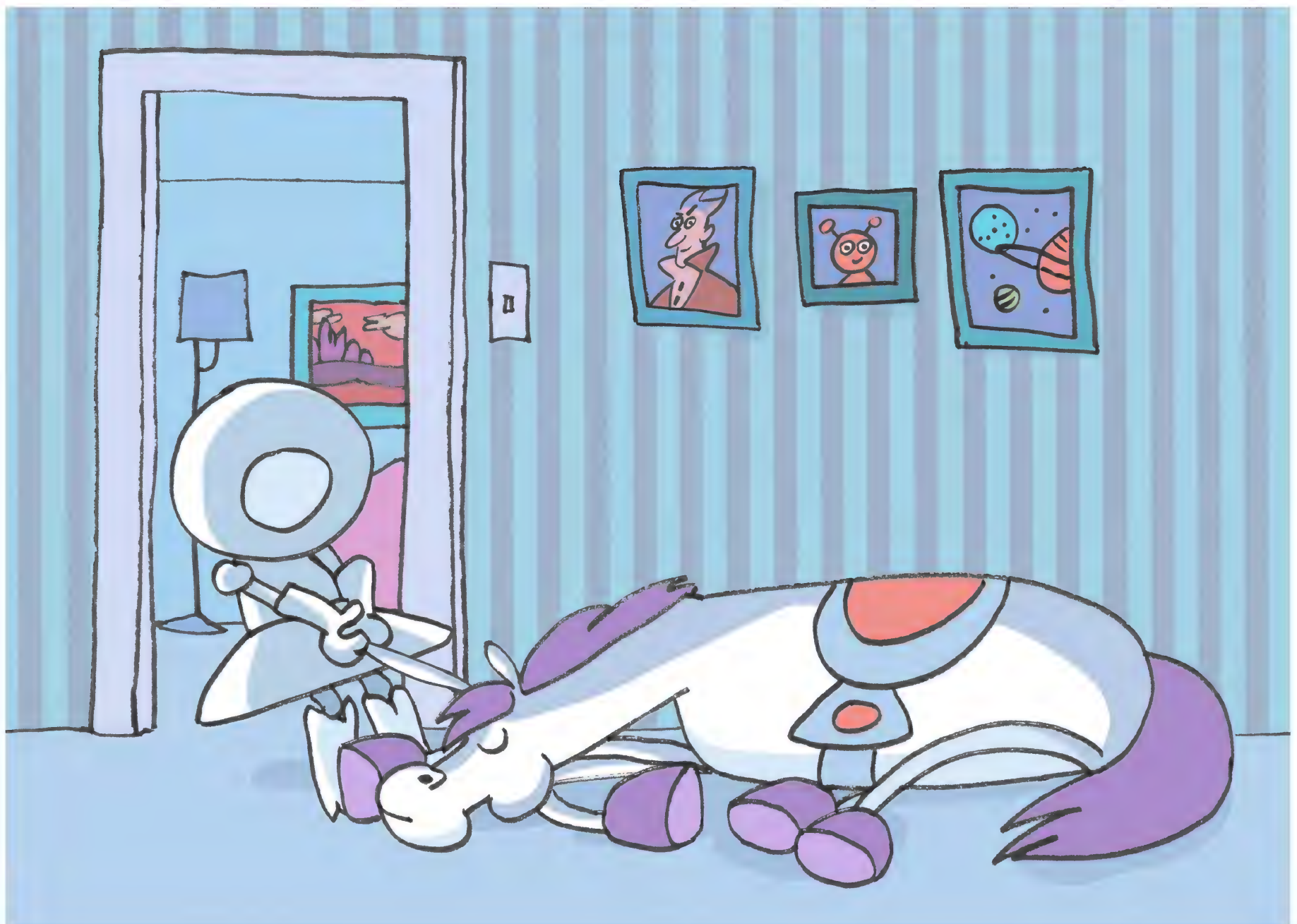
So -- off she goes, with Briscoe and Skreet, to the castle of Queen Silencia.



# OVERDUE!



MARY FARFISA'S OUTER SPACE RADIO THEATER



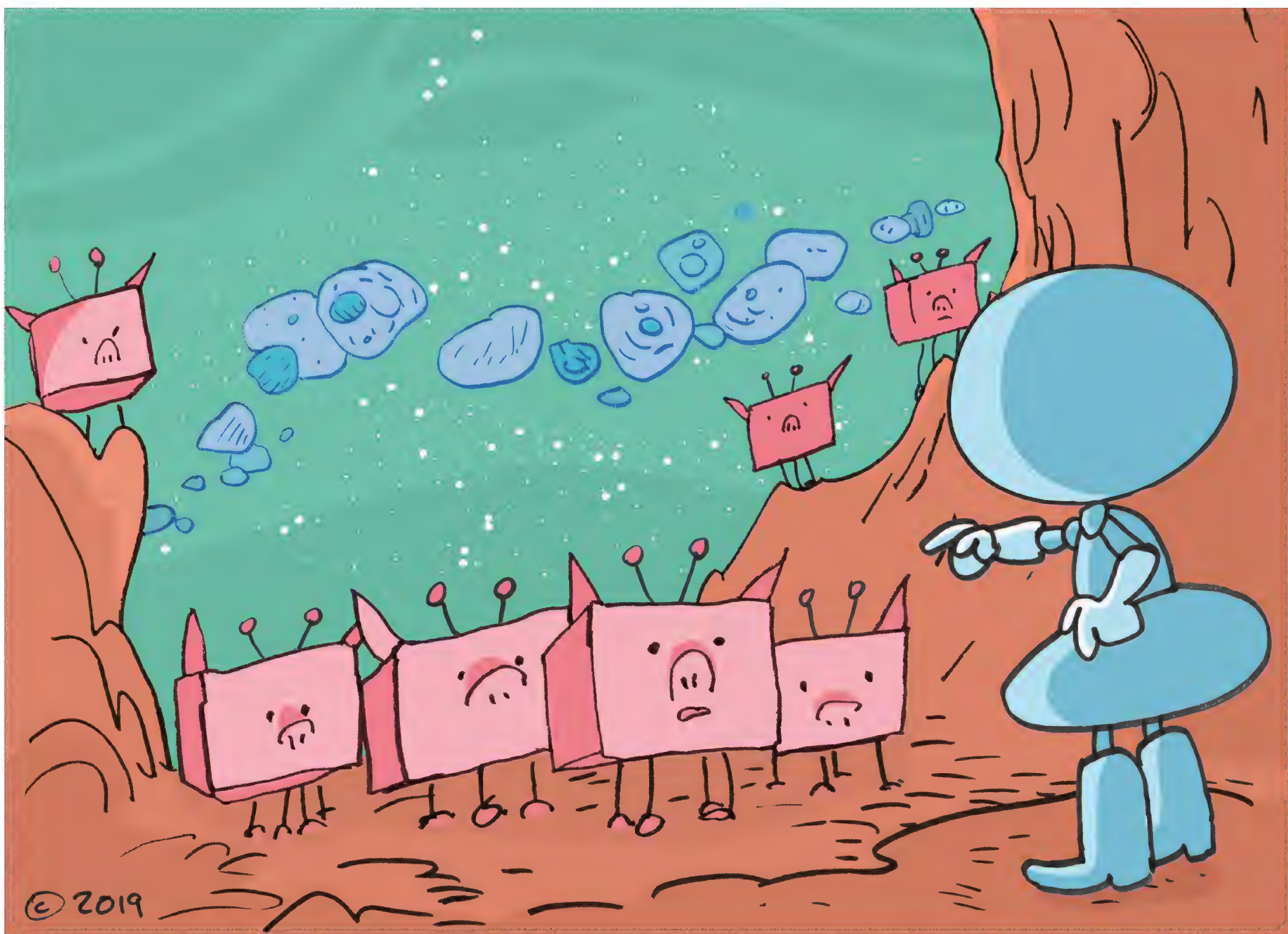




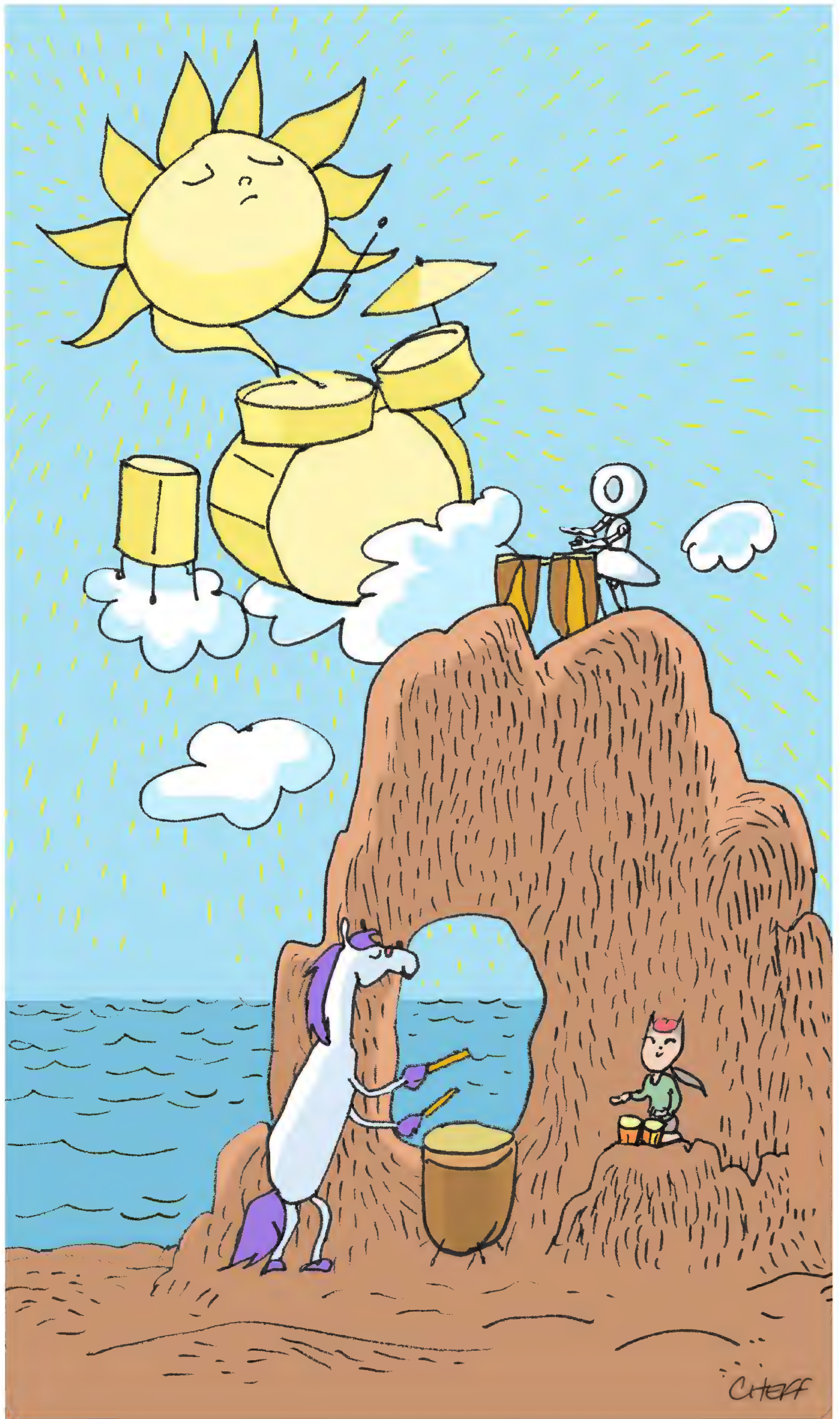














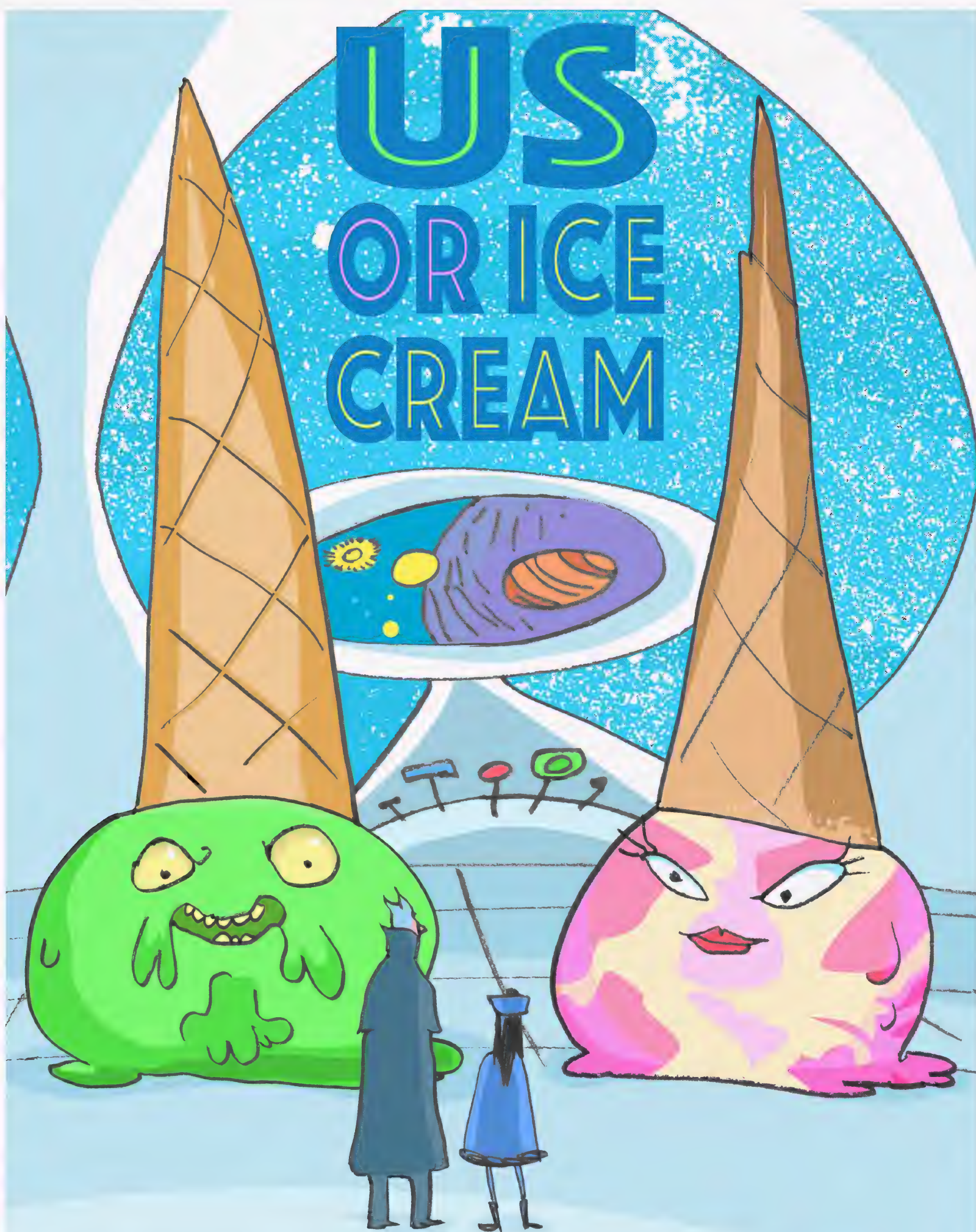
MARY FAREFISA's OUTER SPACE RADIO THEATER

# MOONSTOCK

episode  
29





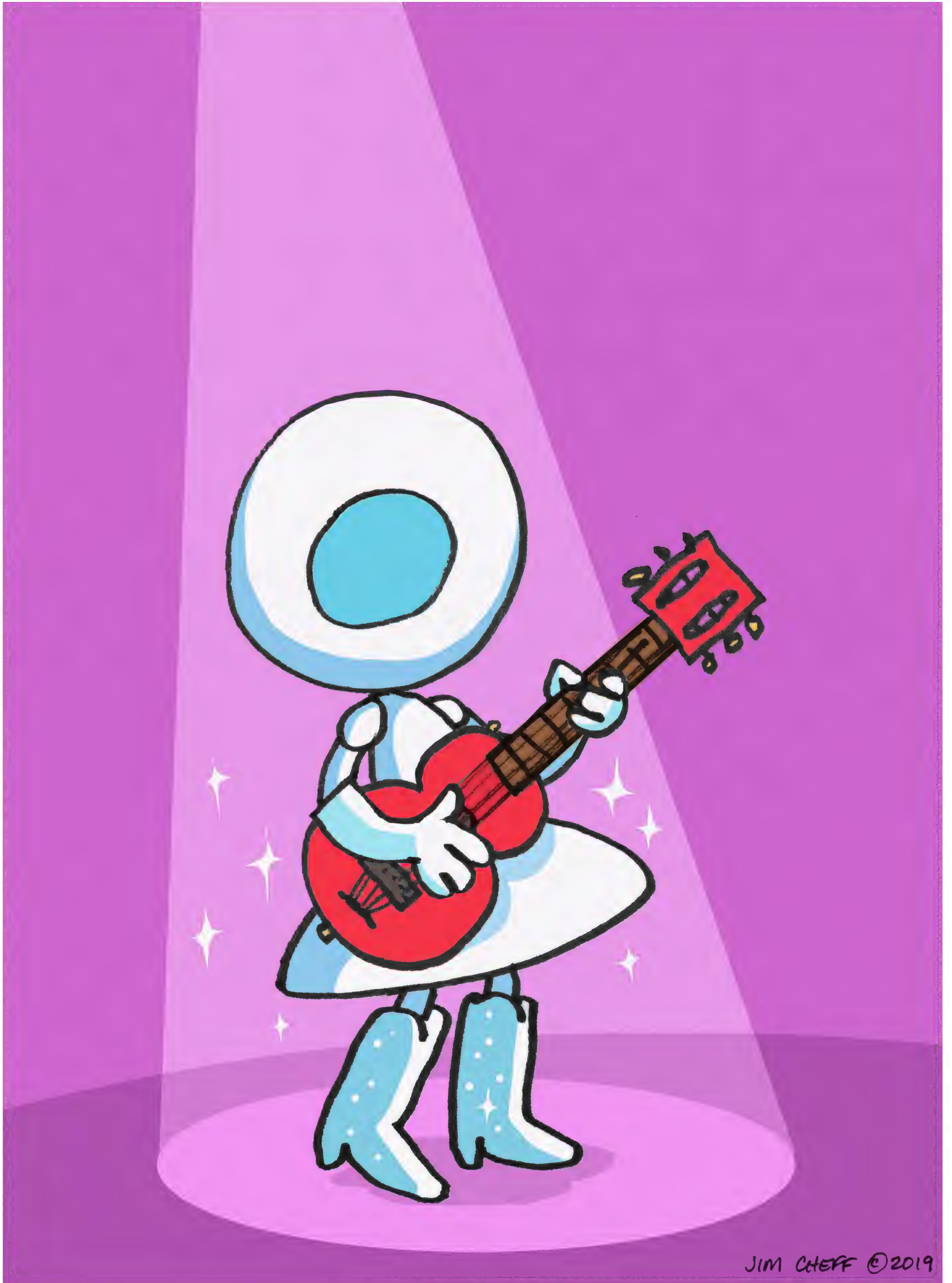


**KATIE KING** as 'JAYNE SARRAH!' **JAMES HASAPIS** as 'HANDYMAN HOW'  
also starring **FRANK FURTADO** **LISA COE** **BEKAH COE** and **IVAN KING**  
**MARY FARFISA'S OUTER SPACE RADIO THEATER**









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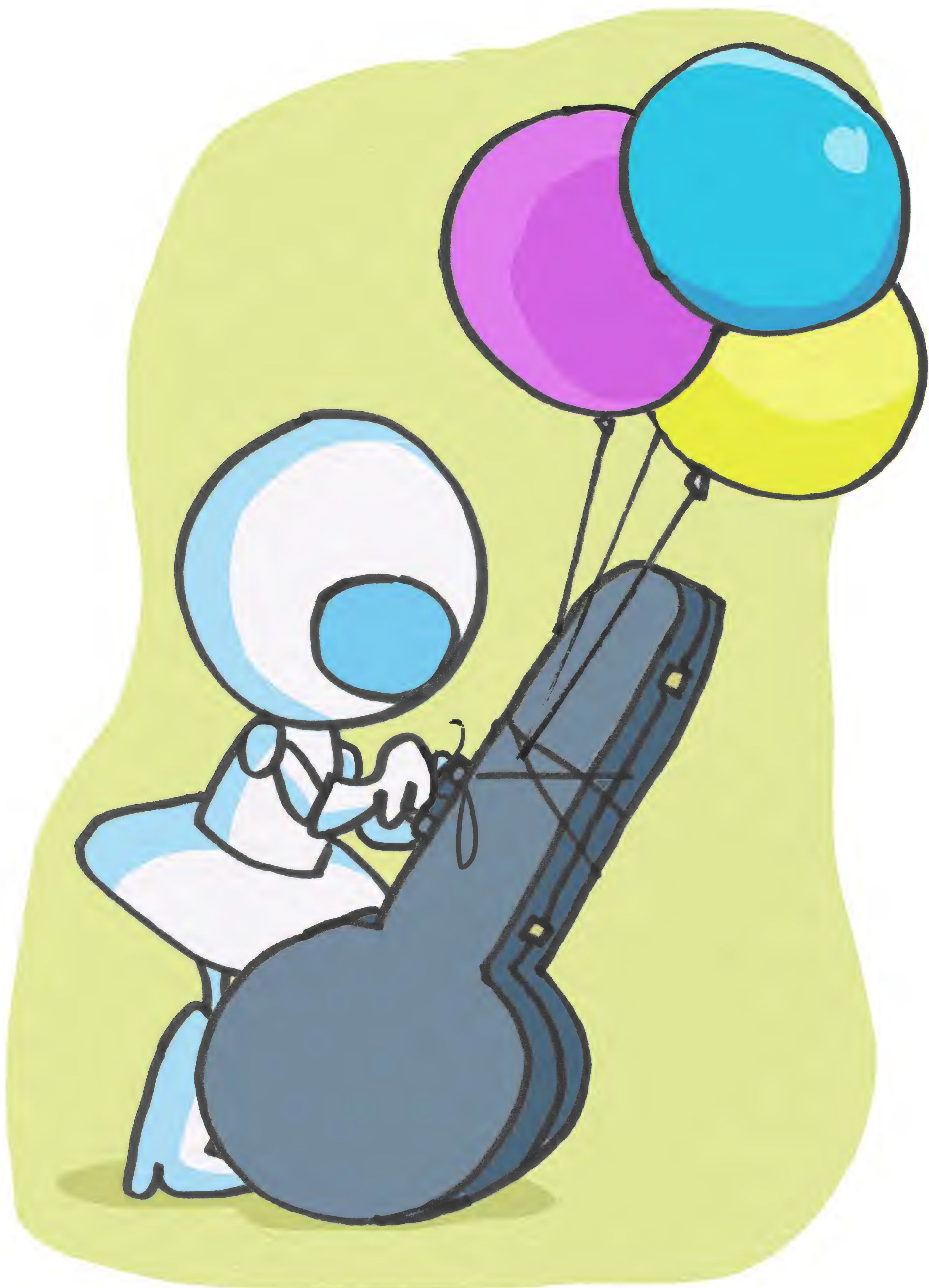
# ART DAY



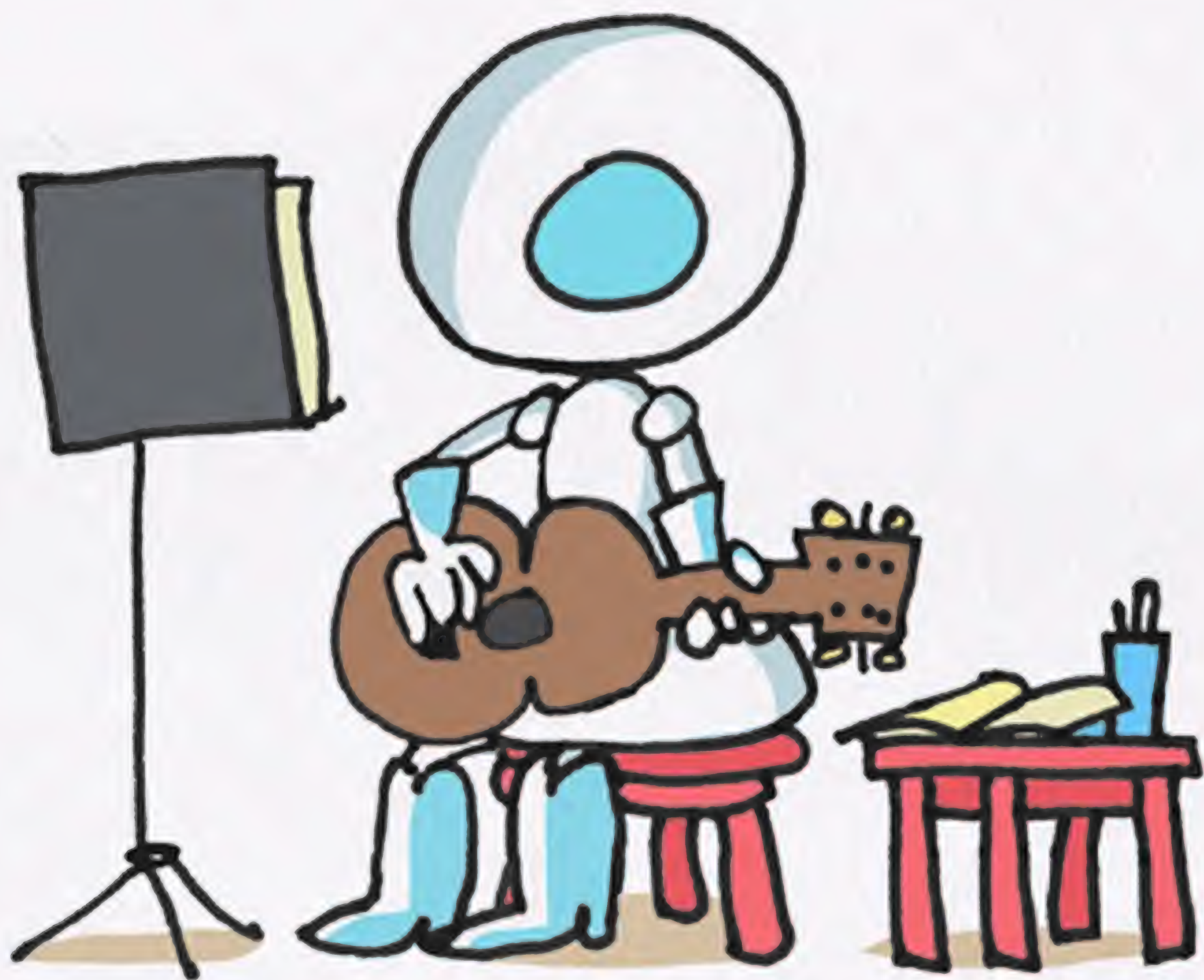




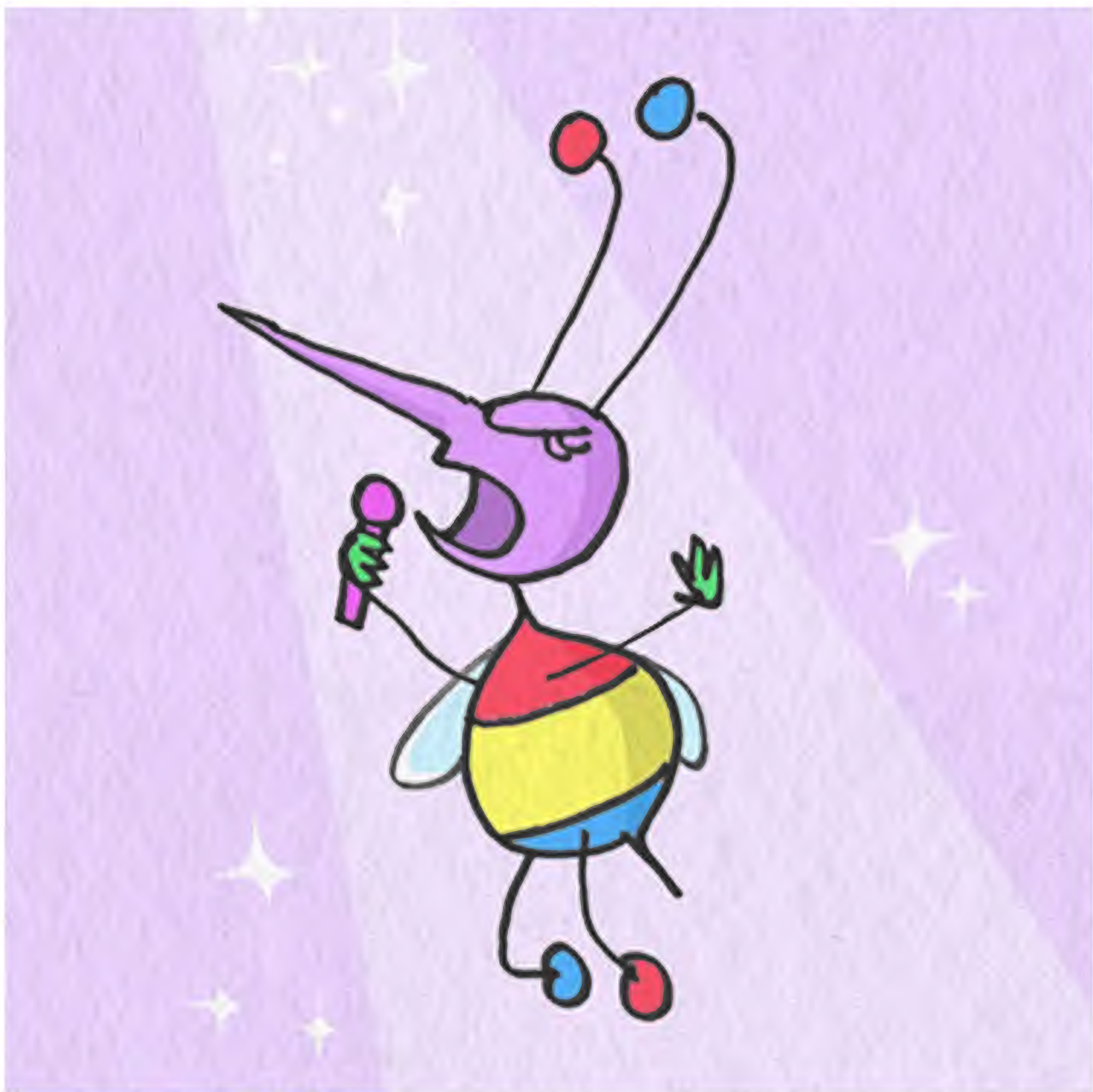










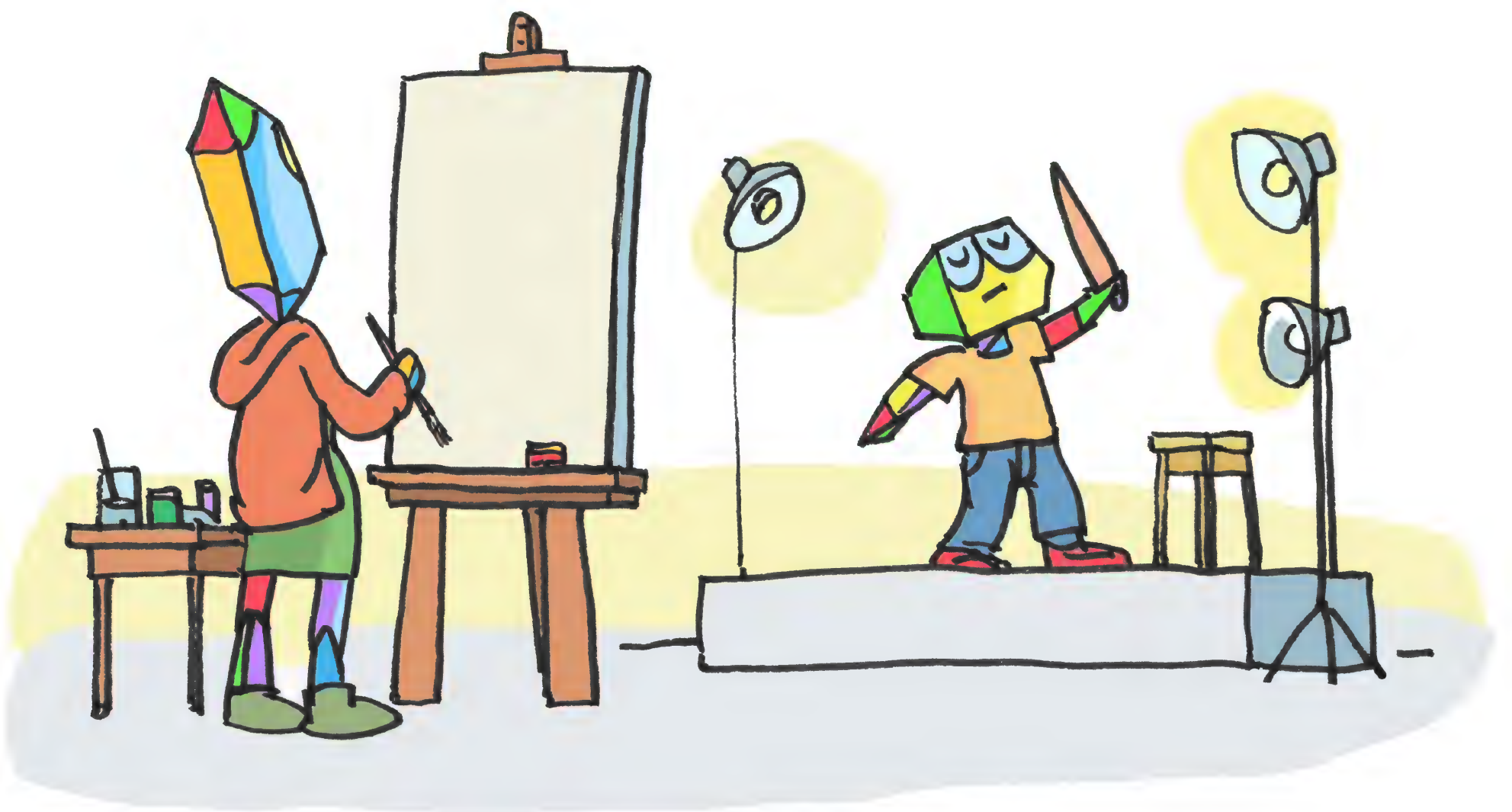
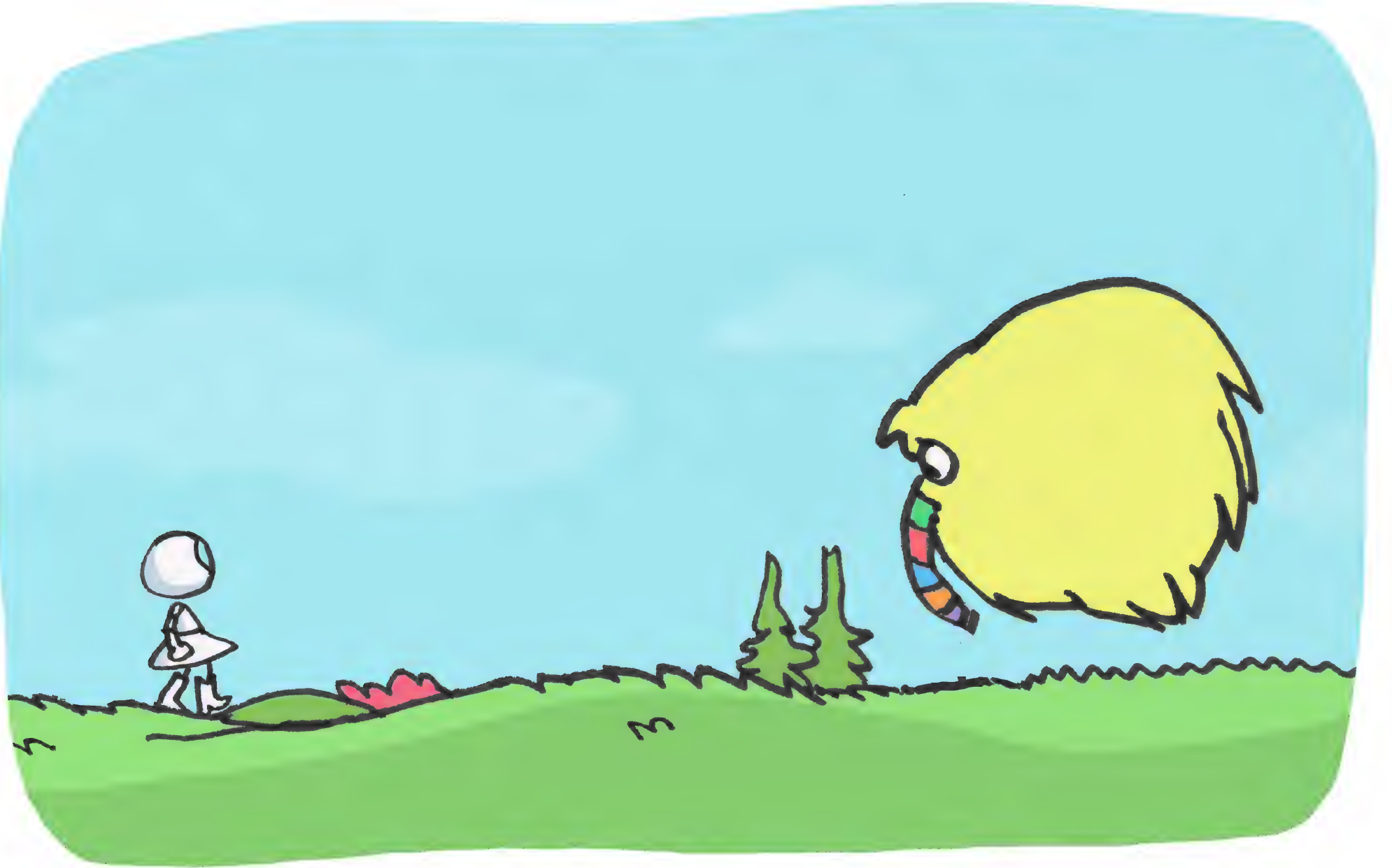




It seems to be coming  
from over here...









## "GOLEM"



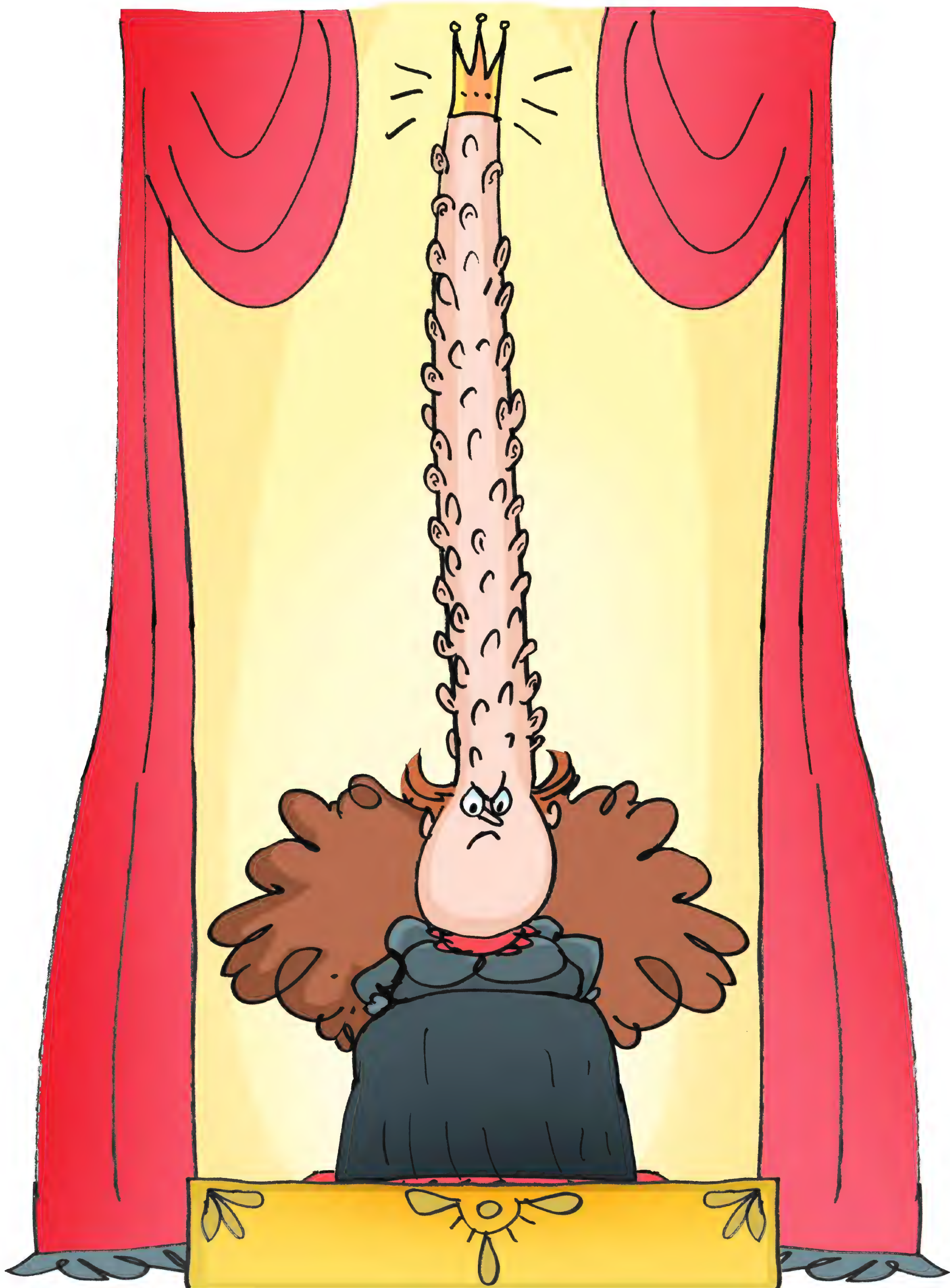














### *The Girl in the Helmet*

Mary Farfisa was ‘born’ several years before the series of radio plays that aired on Radio Sunnyside, KSZN. Her first appearance was in one of my sketchbooks. I drew a picture of three girls in space helmets, dresses, and cowboy boots, fighting off a tribe of monsters on top of a rocky hill.

Later, the helmet girls became *one* helmet girl. She had no space-horse; she drove around in a flying saucer. She had no name. I merely thought of her as the ‘saucer girl,’ or ‘the girl in the helmet.’ I printed a short, wordless picture book about her, and left it anonymously at the Library and places downtown. Later, the name ‘Mary Farfisa’ came to me in a dream.

The more I draw something in my sketchbook, the more I think of stories to go with the drawings. After a while, I wrote a short story about this Mary Farfisa, and self-published it. At that time, I pictured Mary as a young adult, not the eight-year-old girl she would be in the radio series. She did catch songs and sounds in a lasso. She rode in a flying saucer, but it now resembled a horse. (Even so, it was a far cry from Briscoe.)



The theme of this short story was the joy of collecting both music and natural sounds. The BBC Radiophonics Workshop, and composer Daphne Oram, played a part in it. But the real theme of the story was loneliness, and how music can bring people who live vast distances apart, together.



### *The Rough Windows Radio Hour*

This was in 2012. I had recently completed a long, wordless ‘graphic novel’ based on *The Kalevala*, the epic mythological poem of Finland. It was mainly about Vainamoinen, a magician who cast spells through music and song. No one was very interested in the book, which I called *Vaino*, and after two years working on it, I was ready to put it aside and find something else to do. ‘Mary Farfisa’ was just one of the ideas floating around in my head then. I was a little burnt out on drawing, after all the work I’d done on *Vaino*. I was very interested in audio production and experimental music, something I’d been working with since art school.



I started developing a radio show about experimental electronic music for Radio Free Flagstaff, a community radio station that was trying to get off the ground. The show I was working on was called *The Rough Windows Radio Hour*. Its tag line was “Through the rough windows of art, we see the world anew.”

As the host of the program I soon discovered how hard it is to sound relaxed and natural doing short introductions to the music I played – even in the privacy of my own recording room. (The show was pre-recorded; I’ve never felt comfortable performing anything ‘live.’) I played experimental audio from musicians and composers old and new, famous and not-famous. Each *Rough Windows* show had a theme, like ‘The Human Voice,’ or ‘Science Fiction.’



I had recorded finished shows before Radio Free Flagstaff was actually on the air. In 2016, Radio Free Flagstaff had been forming, in fits and starts, for years. It was an online-only station, when I first approached them. Their goal was always to have a land-based FM signal, but this was happening slowly. Permits had to be obtained, and money had to be raised. This was to be done through fundraisers held at the Orpheum Theater.

The fundraisers for Radio Free Flagstaff were disappointing. They were done in the form of “tribute” concerts, showcasing the songs of a

famous singer or band. Local musicians were invited to do a few songs by whoever was the theme of the evening. There was a night of Springsteen, and Dylan, and the Clash. But the events were poorly attended. The people who did show up seemed unwilling to spend more than the price of admission, and not much money was raised. Our promotion tables and our raffle tickets and station t-shirts were for the most part ignored.

Radio Free Flagstaff may not have gained much from these fundraisers, but they were to pay off very well, for me, in the future. It was at the ‘Neil Young’ fundraiser that I met Cara Alboucq -- the singer-songwriter who would take on the role of Mary Farfisa. Cara would play Mary in almost forty episodes of *Mary Farfisa’s Outer Space Radio Theater*.



### *Radio Sunnyside*

There was another community radio station in Flagstaff. It had been around a year or so longer, and it already had an FM signal, and a broadcasting studio set up on Fourth Street: Radio Sunnyside, KSZN. Its station manager



was Mac England. Mac had experience starting up community and listener-sponsored radio stations all over the country.

All low-powered radio stations struggle, but KSZN was having more success finding its footing than Radio Free Flagstaff. Early on, there was talk of the two small stations working together, with Mac acting as an advisor to KOIL, but that was not to be. Radio Free Flagstaff spent only a few months on the air, broadcasting from the ticket booth of the Orpheum Theater.

KSZN wanted all their shows to be done by DJs, live in the studio. I didn't want to be a live DJ, so I did not want to do *Rough Windows* for KSZN. But I was excited to learn that they were interested in airing radio dramas – something I'd always wanted to try my hand at.

One day, around this time, driving down Route 66 with my wife, Gudi, an idea popped, fully-formed, into my head: a series of radio plays for kids. It would be comedy, science fiction, and music. And it would star the girl in the space helmet: Mary Farfisa.

As soon as I thought it, I knew it was the way to go. It was an idea that people 'got' instantly, and liked right away. Mac England and Antara Hunter at Radio Sunnyside liked the idea a lot, and were very supportive. I got right to work on *The Sound Stealer*, Mary Farfisa's first adventure for radio.

### *What Song Does A Star Sing?*

I hadn't forgotten meeting Cara Alboucq at the Neil Young show at the Orpheum. I contacted her when the script was done, and I asked her if she'd be interested in playing an eight-year-old space girl on the radio. She was intrigued. But the Christmas holiday was upon us and she was about to visit family out of state, so we would have to wait a bit before getting together to discuss it.

Cara had an excellent CD out, called *Roam*. The more I listened to *Roam*, the more I hoped Cara would play the part of Mary. Her singing was wonderful. And she had written the songs

on her CD. I knew I would need someone who could write songs to work with, as I hoped to put an original song in each *Mary Farfisa* play.



I met Cara downtown at Fire Creek Coffee, and we talked about my ideas for the show.

I had brought the lyrics for *What Song Does A Star Sing* with me. I wanted Cara to set the words to music, and sing the song as Mary Farfisa. This would be the radio show's theme song.

A couple of weeks later -- at the rehearsal for the first play -- Cara would sit in the living room, and play the song she'd come up with. I got chills the first time I heard it! She had taken the words I'd given her and turned them into a truly beautiful song.

*What Song Does a Star Sing* started every *Mary Farfisa* show for the next two and a half years. Hearing it in the living room that first time was the first thing about the show that really 'clicked' for me. It was the first concrete indication that *Mary Farfisa* could really work as a radio show.



## What Song Does a Star Sing

*What song does a star sing, when no one else is around?*

*What sound does a comet make, when it's flying around?*

*Did you know that the Moon has a favorite tune?*

*Did you know that the Sun enjoys playing the drums?*

*You might think that Outer Space  
is a quiet place  
But there's a melody  
To all that astronomy.*

*I roam through the Galaxies,  
Looking for sounds that interest me.  
There's too many to mention --  
If I just pay attention.*

*Songs and sounds and music and noise  
Can be as much fun as a box full of toys.  
Songs and sounds and music and noise  
I'll catch them all in my lasso  
And bring them to you.*

*(I'm Mary Farfisa.)*

©2018 Cheff, Alboucq

After we talked, I knew Cara was the perfect person to play Mary. Feeling inspired, I went home and finished the complicated watercolor painting I'd been working on, the one that would be the first poster for the show.

Once Cara agreed to be Mary, I had to find someone to play her companion, Briscoe, the space-horse.

Even with the first *Mary Farfisa* script completed, the identity of Briscoe the space-horse was vague. I knew that he was older and more experienced than the eight-year-old Mary. I knew that he would always have a wisecrack or cynical observation to contribute. But what kind of voice would Briscoe have? Early on, I considered finding someone to play him with a voice like the young John Lennon. And how

much older should he be than Mary? Could Briscoe be a teenager? A lot of this, I knew, would be determined by whoever was available to play him.

Terry Ward was the first actor to play Briscoe. At the time, Terry was the station manager of Radio Sunnyside. Terry was a real, professional radio announcer. He stood out among all of us amateurs trying to do radio for the first time. Terry's voice and delivery were very polished. In fact, his 'announcer's voice' seemed too good to go to waste, so I asked him to play both the Narrator AND Briscoe on that first live show. And to my delight he agreed to do it. I did bring up the notion of Terry doing a John Lennon voice for Briscoe, but that didn't pan out. Instead, he did Briscoe as sort-of a mix of Kermit the Frog, and Shaggy from *Scooby Doo*.

It went well, but Terry was only available for that first show. I'd have to find another Briscoe for next week's performance. Briscoe was played on the second show by an excellent actor, Mike Levin. But, like Terry, Mike was only available for one show.





### *The Live Shows from KSZN*

The first two shows were done live. They had their fair share of glitches and mis-cues, and the audio was uneven.

But, all in all, I think it all went off admirably. The actors did a wonderful job, and I was impressed, and continue to be impressed, by how quickly and effectively theater people can gather, and put on a show. I did my best to accompany the actors with a variety of live sound effects. I had a small table of noise-making toys, musical instruments, a balloon, bells, etc.

There was a spontaneous quality to these first live shows, and an endearing, home-made quality to them. There were even some moments I found stirring and transcendent: Cara's rendition of the theme song at the start of the second show, *The Stardust Storm*; and the end of that same show, when the cast joined Nancy Andrews to sing the Welsh lullaby *All Through The Night*. The other cast members joined her in the song's last verse to end the play, and the effect was very moving. In fact, it's one of my very favorite moments of the entire series.

Later in the series, we re-did the first two live plays as studio versions. The production is, naturally, much more polished. And, hopefully, they retain as much charm, if of a different nature, as the two live productions had.

But, even as I strove to make the Mary Farfisa shows sound clean and professional, there was a certain 'home-made' quality that I never wanted to lose. Author Stephen Prince, speaking of the British children's television series *Bagpuss* (produced in the 70's by two other role models of mine, Oliver Postgate and Peter Fermin) wrote:

*Theirs was work that did not feel as if it had been created as part of an assembly line and targeted at a well defined cultural demographic and marketplace. It was more personal and precious feeling and seems nearer to examples of a form of folk art.*

This was something I aspired to in every episode: to create shows that felt like something made by human hands, in human situations, right in your own home town.



### *Being Briscoe*

Finding someone to play Briscoe was a real problem. As Mary's friend, guardian and sidekick, Briscoe was to appear in practically every episode of the show, and I didn't want him to have a different voice each time. So, I reluctantly decided to play Briscoe myself -- I knew I could count on myself to be there each week! I've never wanted to be any sort of an actor. And aside from my decidedly introverted personality, I was terrified of trying to 'act' alongside Cara, Katie, Leslie and April, who were all so good.

The saving grace for me was that, beginning with the third show, the show would be no longer be done live. It had proven too difficult to set up for a live show at the station each week. Starting with the third show, we'd be recording it in my home recording studio. This



meant I'd have ample chances to re-do my shakiest line readings in private, and edit out my worst moments.

I will say that I think my voice meshed well with Cara's, and that we worked well as a duo. My 'Briscoe' was a deeper version of my own voice, with a certain debt to Mr. Ed. Also, as Cara and I became friends, our radio conversations as Mary and Briscoe took on a relaxed and natural quality, and a warmth that I think is pleasant for young listeners.



*Katie King*

Katie King is the funniest and most inventive actress I've ever recorded. From the beginning, Katie was an essential part of *Mary Farfisa*. Her knack for comedy, and her ability to find voices for the show's most eccentric characters, was a godsend.

Katie played, not one, but two of my favorite characters: Blasé Koolkatt and Jayne Sarrah! (with an exclamation *point*). Plus, she could write songs, and sing. Katie wrote all the "theme songs" in *Us, or Ice Cream*. She also worked out wonderful a cappella arrangements of the songs to sing with Frank Furtado, Bekah Coe and Lisa Coe.

Katie's young son, Ivan, is also a talented actor. Ivan holds the distinction of being the youngest

performer we ever had on the show. He played Needle the Icicle in the Christmas episode *Merry Thanksalotsmas and Happy Giftsgiving* when he was just two years old! Later, Ivan would impress us all by being able to say "Bazorbabillian Bassoon" -- a challenge for actors of *any* age!

The strong point of Mary Farfisa's character was her relentless cheerfulness and can-do attitude. Katie was able to play characters that countered and complemented Mary's sunniness, and added darker and more exotic flavors to the mix. The trippiness of Blasé Koolkatt, and the ferocity of Jayne Sarrah!, made for a fun and interesting counterpoint to Mary's sensible sweetness.



*Leslie Baker*

Another blessing was Leslie Baker, who was brought to us through Katie. A dance instructor at Flagstaff Arts and Leadership Academy (FALA), Leslie was a real powerhouse of talent – she could sing, act, and do an amazing roster of voice characterizations.





Leslie stood out best perhaps as the voice of WhichWay, the continually evolving navigation system of a forgotten spacecraft. But, throughout the production of the show, she played a stunning variety of other characters -- male, female, human, alien, and animal. I was in the habit of asking Leslie to take on these roles at a moment's notice. *Can you play the Prime Minister of Embrios tonight? Can you be a singing whale? Can you play a talking bell? How about a kid made of bubblegum?* Leslie came through every time.

#### *Nancy Andrews*

Nancy Andrews came to us through a bit of very good fortune that led Gudi to run into her at the supermarket, right at the time I was scrambling about for actors to be in the first play. Nancy and Gudi knew each other, and we had seen Nancy perform in a production of *Miss Saigon* at Sinagua High School. Gudi told Nancy I was casting a radio play, and was having trouble finding actors. Nancy said she'd love to do it.

There was a role in *The Sound Stealer* that called for strong acting and the singing of a song. Queen Silencia is the angry ruler of the planet Bazorbabill. She's stolen all the sounds that everything on the planet makes. She wants Bazorbabill to "*Just ... be ... quiet!*" Queen Silencia sings a song about "*What a Happy Universe it would be*" if nothing made any noise.

Nancy played the part of Queen Silencia perfectly. And, she came back for the second play, too, to play Gentelina, a grandmotherly star-dragon.

As we recorded more and more plays, I tried to keep things interesting by having different people, and different characters, 'narrate' the plays. Nancy was hands down my favorite narrator. She gave the shows a touch of warmth and playfulness, and created a cozy atmosphere, perfect for stories and daydreams.





### *April Stalder*

April Stalder answered a flier I put up at our local library:



**MARY FARFISA's OUTER SPACE RADIO THEATER** is looking for talented and dynamic **VOICE ACTORS** to perform live plays for children on Saturday mornings! Must be willing to sing, do funny voices and make silly sounds. Our show airs every Saturday morning on **KSZN 101.5 FM, RADIO SUNNYSIDE**. Contact Jim at [jimcheff@suddenlink.net](mailto:jimcheff@suddenlink.net) to audition. Or call 928-221-3417.

April's first role was a hyperactive space dog, who panted, barked and whined, non-stop, through the entire first half of the show. She blew us all away with what must have been an exhausting performance. Then, in the second half of that same show, April played Orbit Annie, the audio wrangler who teaches Mary how to catch sounds in her lasso. Recording with April was always unpredictable and fun. April was so good at playing Orbit Annie that she became a recurring character. April also played a very different regular character: Murkel, Mary's shy friend made of green sludge. Murkel is secretly a Sailor Moon-type superhero on her homeworld, Slugmush. April's daughter, Anna, played various parts on the show as well, most notably Krystal, a geomite from the planet Gallium.

### *Music and Friendship in Outer Space*

I had committed to producing a new *Mary Farfisa* play every week for the first seven shows. The pace was a little insane. But we



became a more and more efficient team with each play we did. It was usually me, Cara, Leslie, Nancy and April, joined by one or two new people who were just there to be on one show. In a lot of cases, the smaller roles were not given out till everyone had arrived, and the living room would be buzzing with people coming up with weird voices, or working out how to make a crazy sound. It was hectic, but a lot of fun.

Neighbors grew accustomed to see cast members' cars gather outside, and watch them enter and exit our little house with scripts, musical instruments, kids, and sometimes pets, even. Gudi always prepared a buffet of home cooked food for the actors, as we weren't able to pay them for their hard work.

Original songs were often worked out just before the recordings started, and the living room would become a makeshift music studio. Cara wrote the music for most of the songs, and was always ready to accompany her fellow actors on guitar. I was fortunate to have found



such a quick and accomplished musician to work with -- not to mention Cara's singing voice, which was lovely.



I would call the actors into the recording room in small groups. We would work through the script in order, page by page. Between their scenes, the actors would sit in the living room and enjoy the food and each other's company. I tried to write as many parts as I could for kids. Gudi and the others had the challenging task of keeping them quiet enough that they would not be heard in the recording room until it was time to do their lines. That was not always entirely possible. But the rowdy, congenial atmosphere in the living room kept spirits high, and I'm sure it was, at least in part, responsible for the energy the actors brought to the show.

The core team of *Mary Farfisa* – Cara, Katie, Leslie, Nancy, April, and me – hit its stride with the seventh episode of the series, *Overdue*. Several people have told me it is their favorite episode. Briscoe's overdue library book sparks off a galaxies-spanning chase and the wrath of robot librarians riding mechanical sharks. Storywise, *Overdue* marked a high point in the show's developing distillation of comedy, science fiction, and fairy tale. And we'd become a tight-knit family of eccentrics who were having a lot of fun. I think you can hear

that in the finished shows. We looked forward to Tuesday evenings not just as a creative outlet, but as a chance to get together with friends.

### *Mary Farfisa's Universe*

As improvised as the execution of the plays could be as audio productions, we always worked from a tight, finished script. And I had always been clear on the tone of the show, and the direction the stories would, or would not, take.

*Mary Farfisa's Outer Space Radio Theater* would depict Outer Space as a fun, creative place, full of artists, poets, musicians and dreamers. There would be no space battles and very few real villains. Characters might behave badly, but there would be no violence, and no problems that couldn't be solved through peaceful measures. And Outer Space would be a place where the imagination had room to stretch out, and grow as big as it needed to be.

I was determined not to take the aggressive and hyper-active approach you find in a lot of children's programming. I wanted to make a gentle, thoughtful show that was fun, but not frantic. My models for the tone of *Mary Farfisa* were shows I remembered from my own youth, like *The Friendly Giant*, *Davey and Goliath*, and *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*.

As for the format of the plays, I took inspiration from The Firesign Theater's innovative approach to telling stories with sound. The funny and very entertaining series *Ruby*, *The Galactic Gumshoe*, done in the 1970's by ZBS, was also a big influence.

### *The "Aftershow"*

The *Mary Farfisa* plays all ran about thirty minutes, but it was an hour-long show. The second half-hours, what I came to call the aftershow, were made up of children's stories and music from other sources.



I avoided things that were too easily heard elsewhere. I played a lot of children's records from the forties and fifties. (I learned to always listen to these old records in their entirety before broadcasting them. I was guilty of putting a few cringe-inducing examples of racial and gender stereotyping on the air.) But, by and large, there was a huge body of vintage children's material for me to play during these after-shows. These recordings were well-produced and enjoyable, and they may not have been heard by anyone for decades.



These were introduced by Mary, who said that Briscoe had millions of records in his saddlebag. And she'd ask him "which one are you going to play for us this week?"

There were some contemporary children's singers I played many times, like Bari Koral and Laurie Berkner. I played songs from *Deer Sounds* by Linda Perry and Sara Gilbert a lot. I looked for songs that used onomatopoeia, as they fit well with the emphasis on sound and noises in the Mary Farfisa stories. Tom Glazer songs, like *Honk-Hiss-Tweet-Gggggggggg*,

were heard regularly. I played Kenneth Little Hawk and Sue Straw. I played songs from artists not usually associated with children's music, like the Flaming Lips, Prince, Vashti Bunyan, and Bjork.

Once I'd produced enough *Mary Farfisa* plays that I could play a "re-run" every other week, I had time to produce short segments narrated by Mary and Briscoe. I used these segments in the aftershows. Cara and I did a three-minute segment where Briscoe and Mary discuss *Four Minutes and 33 Seconds*, the 'silent' composition by composer John Cage. I also played some of the original songs that we'd recorded for previous *Mary Farfisa* plays.

When I went to public events to promote the show, I would bring my laptop and microphone and record local kids doing introductions for the show ("You're listening to Mary Farfisa, on Radio Sunnyside, 101.5"), and telling "space jokes." I used these clips between the songs and stories of the aftershows. I think they pulled the hour together, and made it a diverse but unified listening experience.





## Public Reception

The first year of *Mary Farfisa's Outer Space Radio Theater* was an exciting time. It's hard to say how many people were aware of the strange hour-long children's show that aired every Saturday morning at ten. But the station, while local, streamed on the Internet 24 hours a day. So we did have listeners all over the world. Toward the end of the show's run at KSZN, episodes were being played on Saturday mornings, then rebroadcast on Mondays and Wednesdays in the 'after school' time slot.

Once episodes aired I would post them on the show's mixcloud page, so people could listen to them whenever they liked. They're still there:

**[mixcloud.com/maryfarfisashow](https://mixcloud.com/maryfarfisashow)**

The first press coverage of *Mary Farfisa* was in an article about Radio Sunnyside that appeared in the *Arizona Daily Sun*. The article described *Mary Farfisa's Outer Space Radio Theater* in detail.



Sometime later, I was interviewed by Diandra Markgraf, a writer for *Flag Live!* and *Northern Arizona Mountain Living* magazine. Gudi and I returned home from a trip to Florida to find Mary Farfisa jamming with the Moon on the cover of *Flag Live!* There was a wonderful article inside, full of drawings and photos of the

cast. *Mountain Living* published a reworked version of the same article in the month that followed.

Nick Geib and Isaac Andrews filmed us recording *Mary Goes to School* for 4FlagTV. We did the show dressed as our characters, and the video they shot is a perfect time capsule of how the *Mary Farfisa* shows were made.

Gudi and I began doing tables at local events, spreading the word and handing out stickers and activity sheets promoting the show.

In 2017, I was nominated for a Viola Award in the Storytelling category.

I was asked if we would do a live performance of a show at the Nominee Showcase, a month before the awards. If I'd been nervous to try acting alongside Cara and the others in my home, I was really scared to try acting on stage with them, at the Coconino Center for the Arts.





But, I survived. We got laughs, and people seemed to really enjoy it.

We did an abbreviated version of *The Sound Stealer*. I drew large pictures of our characters for us to stand behind as we performed the play. Cara anchored the show with her lovely singing and spot-on acting as Mary, bringing the same sprightly charm she brought to the radio show, to the stage. Nancy, Leslie and Katie were on hand, and we were delighted to have James Hasapis join us as the Vakyoomapotamus.

I didn't win the Viola, but the exposure of the nomination paid off. It was no longer hard to find people to appear on the show. In fact, people sought me out, and wanted to know how they could be on *Mary Farfisa*.



Four episodes of *Mary Farfisa* were selected for broadcast in Scotland in 2016 and 2017, as part of Radiophrenia, an annual FM radio event that highlights noteworthy radio productions from around the world. Broadcast from Glasgow's

Center for Contemporary Art, the episodes were played on four different Saturday mornings.

*Mountain Living* magazine published a three-page *Mary Farfisa* picture story, in their Christmas 2017 issue.



In 2018, I was nominated for Viola Awards in two categories; Storytelling, and Innovation. I didn't win in either category. But I had fun making a 6-foot tabletop diorama for that year's Showcase. I love making models. I spent a couple of months making a miniature version of the recreation room in Mary's inflatable house. I made large paper mache models of Mary, Skreet the Skrumblebee, a star piglet, and several Pink-eyed Ickybods. There was an old time radio in the room that played clips from the radio show, and a shelf full of 'books' with the titles of past episodes on their spines.





*Goodbye, Mary, Goodbye!*

*Mary Farfisa* was on every Saturday morning for over two years, and it was the best creative experience of my life.

But as we approached the 35th half-hour episode, it started to feel like it was time to move on. We all had other projects we wanted to do. Cara was literally about to ‘move on’ – to Montana. I hadn’t lost interest in *Mary Farfisa*, but I was more and more drawn to telling her story in picture books, comics, and paintings.

When I wrote *The Eagle In The Wall* I was certain that it would be the last episode of the series. It’s no accident that the last words in the play are Handyman How and Jayne Sarrah! saying “Goodbye, Mary ... goodbye!” Or, that the last word Briscoe says is “Goodnight.”

I did write and produce two more episodes before ending the show. But, on July 14, 2018, I said thanks and goodbye to our listeners on KSZN. Hunter Redday was in the broadcast booth with me when I signed off, and he joked: “Aww, kids all over Flagstaff are crying now.”

I doubt that was the case. But it is nice to think that we might be missed, and that there are kids out there -- and some adults, too – who look forward to the return of *Mary Farfisa*.



*At the Violas Showcase with Aven, our favorite friend of the show.*

